

# Kafarin Gorge inspires new vision for eco-tourism in Ilam Province



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Nestled deep within the Zagros Mountains, amid the silence of the rocks and the whisper of flowing rivers, lies a serene and majestic gorge known as Kafarin or Kafari — a place still untouched on Iran’s tourism map, yet one that could easily become a dream destination for nature lovers.

With its towering cliffs, crystal-clear waters, diverse vegetation, and enchanting landscapes, Kafarin Gorge (Tange Kafarin) showcases the pristine beauty of western Iran—a land where every turn tells a story of erosion, time, and natural splendor, according to ISNA.

Despite its remarkable natural and cultural potential, Kafarin Gorge remains in obscurity. There are no tourism facilities, no signposts, and no mention in the country’s official list of national attractions. Yet, this



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very anonymity has preserved its purity, offering a rare opportunity to introduce this natural heritage to the world with care and responsibility.

Farzad Sharifi, director general of the Ilam Province Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, told ISNA that Kafarin Gorge is one of the

most beautiful and least-known natural attractions in Ilam Province. Located near the town of Badreh, it holds immense potential for the development of sustainable tourism.”

Sharifi explained, “In recent years, efforts have been made to identify and include this area in the list of the province’s nat-



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ural attractions. However, it still needs greater attention from government agencies and the media.”

He added that the gorge, with its high cliffs, clear river, rich flora, and breathtaking views, can be an appealing destination for eco-tourists, researchers, and nature enthusiasts alike.

Sharifi emphasized that Kafarin is one of Ilam’s overlooked treasures which, with proper introduction and the creation of basic infrastructure, could become a major tourism hub in southern Ilam.

Sharifi also noted that maintaining the gorge’s untouched state alongside responsible tourism

development could serve as a successful model for coexistence between humans and nature in the Zagros region.

He concluded by stressing that, in addition to its natural beauty, Kafarin Gorge is home to valuable plant and animal species that must be protected from pollution and destruction.

“Educating visitors, installing warning signs, and involving local guides can play a key role in preserving this natural heritage,” he said.

Promise of a sustainable future

Experts believe that destinations such as Kafarin Gorge represent the next frontier of eco-tourism in Iran. As more travelers seek authentic, low-impact experiences, regions like Ilam — with their unspoiled landscapes and welcoming communities — are poised to benefit from a growing global interest in sustainable travel.

Developing Kafarin responsibly could not only boost the local economy but also create jobs for residents in guiding, hospitality, and conservation services.

The area’s proximity to other natural attractions and ancient sites of the Zagros Mountains adds further value. Integrating Kafarin into regional tourism routes could help balance visitor flow and prevent over-tourism in more crowded destinations. However, environmentalists warn that any development must prioritize conservation, using eco-friendly infrastructure and strict waste management policies to protect the gorge’s delicate ecosystem.

Ultimately, Kafarin Gorge stands as both a hidden paradise and a test of commitment — to see whether modern tourism can evolve in a way that truly respects the land it seeks to celebrate.

## Experience surreal landscapes of Jask

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The Martian and Miniature Mountains of Jask — a geological phenomenon renowned for their unique shapes and vivid colors — rise in the eastern part of Hormozgan Province. With their pristine landscapes and striking formations, these mountains hold significant potential for nature-based tourism and geotourism in Jask. Situated near the Lirdaf coast, Pyveshk village, and historical sites such as the Jask Telegraph House, the area presents visitors with a rare and compelling blend of natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Along the turquoise shores of the Makoran coast, under

the blazing sun and caressing sea breeze, this extraordinary mountain range emerges as if it belongs to another world. With sharp folds and dazzling hues, the Martian and Miniature Mountains of Jask stand out not only as one of Hormozgan Province’s most distinctive natural wonders but also as one of its most untouched tourist destinations — a landscape where the Earth seems to display its artistry on a planetary scale, chtn.ir wrote.

Located in the southeast of Hormozgan, within the Lirdaf district and near Pyveshk, the Jask Martian Mountains are approximately 80 kilometers from the city center. Visible from the main Jask–Sirik road, they im-

mediately capture the attention of travelers. These formations are part of the wider Makoran geological system, stretching from the vicinity of Gwadar Bay in Sistan and Baluchestan to the area near Minab in Hormozgan. The mountains are composed of clay, marl, and soft sandstone, shaped over millions of years by the erosive forces of wind, rain, and seasonal streams. The sparse vegetation and low humidity leave their sharp ridges and dense sedimentary layers exposed, creating a striking visual display. At sunrise and sunset, sunlight reflecting off their silvery-gray surfaces produces a surreal scene, as though the earth and sky converge at a border of colors.

Jask, particularly the Lirdaf district, experiences a hot and arid climate, yet the mountains’ proximity to the sea generates refreshing air currents and contrasting landscapes of aridity and moisture. Not far from the slopes, visitors can encounter small village palm groves, seasonal ponds, and migratory bird routes, each revealing a unique facet of Makran’s diverse natural environment.

During winter and early spring, the region’s limited rainfall forms runoff streams that carve through the valleys and grooves of the mountains, further revealing their layered structure. Alongside the scenic Lirdaf beaches and neighboring villages, the Martian Mountains

of Jask present an extraordinary array of opportunities for ecotourism. Beyond their visual appeal, the area offers an ideal setting for the development of geological tourism (geotourism) and educational excursions.

The mountains’ unique allure lies in their combination of contrasting colors, natural forms, and the profound silence that envelops the landscape, giving visitors the sensation of stepping into another world. Moreover, their proximity to Jask’s main roads and easy accessibility make them an attractive destination for short trips by both domestic and international travelers.

An additional advantage of the Martian Mountains of Jask is

their closeness to other historical and natural attractions of the region. Less than an hour away, the historic Jask Telegraph House — a valuable Safavid-era structure later used by the British as a communications and trade center — stands as a testament to the region’s rich heritage. Today, it is registered on Iran’s National Heritage List. Visitors can also explore the unspoiled Lirdaf beaches with their coral reefs, the sandy hills of Pyveshk village, and Jask’s traditional palm groves. The combination of these natural and historical attractions positions the area as a promising hub for nature-based tourism in eastern Hormozgan Province.



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